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Sommer, Christoph ; Marty, Linda

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## The role of media brands in media planning

Christoph Sommer\* and Linda Marty

*Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland*

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Brand management is well established in the media industry. However, little research exists on the role of a media company's brand in the media planning process. Exploring the brand's relevance from a theoretical perspective, we argue that it is linked to other qualitative criteria. The results of our exploratory study show that for media planners in Austria and Switzerland, the media brand is most important when advertising for specialty goods, in the premium market segment and in magazines and newspapers. We conclude by presenting implications for media companies' brand management to fully exploit their brands' potential.

**Keywords:** branding; brand management; media brands; media planning; advertising

### 1. Introduction

For decades, books, newspapers, magazines, movies, radio and television have been considered distinct media with different production and consumption characteristics. Because of digitalisation and convergence, these media boundaries have disappeared (Albarran, 2010; McDowell, 2006; Sommer & von Rimscha, 2014). Furthermore, what was known as the mass audience has become divided and subdivided into ever-smaller target groups, who can choose from multiple products within a certain niche. The number of options available has skyrocketed; however, usage has not kept pace. Consequently, the only way to attract more customers is to capture market share from direct competitors (McDowell, 2004, 2006). These developments forced media companies to create brands, which are "a name, term, sign, design, or unifying combination of them intended to identify and distinguish a product or service from its competitors" (McDowell, 2006, p. 234). Media brands and branding strategies are designed to communicate thoughts and feelings to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional value (McDowell, 2006). In consequence, the media brand creates a unique environment, independent of its means of distribution.

Brand management in the media is somewhat different from that in other industries. Most importantly, it needs to address two markets: audience and advertising (Baumgarth, 2004; McDowell, 2006; Sommer, 2015). Media research tends to focus on the audience side of media brands and neglects the importance of branding in advertising and media planning. Ots and Wolff (2008) state that media brands influence the media buyers' selection process, whereas a recent study by Knuth, Kouki, and Strube (2013) points out the value of qualitative selection criteria in general. However, details about the media brand, which is considered along with other qualitative criteria

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [ch.sommer@ipmz.uzh.ch](mailto:ch.sommer@ipmz.uzh.ch)

in media planning, remain unknown. This information is particularly important to media companies who need to manage the media selling process (Knuth et al., 2013) and understand the drivers of advertising revenues (Wirtz, Pelz, & Ullrich, 2011). 40

This exploratory study investigates the role of the media brand in media planning, examining its importance compared with quantitative and other qualitative criteria as well as within the media planning process. With a better understanding of the media brand, we aim to derive the implications for media companies' brand management. We provide a literature overview on brand management for media companies (section 2.1) media planning and qualitative selection criteria (section 2.2) as well as the potential benefits of media brands for advertisements (section 2.3) from which we develop our research questions. After describing the empirical study, results are presented and discussed. We conclude with recommendations for further research and practical implications for media companies' brand management. 45 50

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Brand management for media companies

In brand management, brand identity is a well-established concept (Aaker, 1991; Esch, 2012; Meffert, Burmann, & Kirchgeorg, 2008), which Aaker (2010, p. 68) describes as a "unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply promises to the customers from the organization." Through the brand identity, a relationship between the brand and the customer is established, providing functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 2010). 55 60

Accordingly, the concept of brand identity integrates an internal and external perspective as well as their interactions. While the internal perspective describes the brand's self-perception, the external perspective refers to its public perception. The brand is positioned by strategists through the brand identity, which is perceived by the customer as brand image. The fit of identity and image is crucial as it determines the credibility of the brand's positioning (Burmann & Meffert, 2005). 65

The media industry has several characteristics that make its branding different from other industries (Chan-Olmsted, 2006b; Doyle, 2013; Sommer, 2015). Of the characteristics, the most important is that the media serves audience and advertisers at the same time, which is commonly described as a two-sided market. Hence, strategies for both markets are needed. In addition, a fit of brand identity and brand image on the audience as well as on the advertising side is desirable (Sommer, 2015). While there is a fair amount of research on the audience, little is known about media brands in the advertising market and, in particular, media planning (Baumgarth, 2004; Berkler, 2008; McDowell, 2006; Ots & Wolff, 2008). 70 75

### 2.2 Media planning and qualitative selection criteria

Media planning is a sub-field of advertising (Pasadeos, Barban, Yi, & Kim, 1997). It comprises a series of decisions regarding the best means of delivering advertisements to prospective purchasers of a brand (Sissors & Baron, 2010). Hence, it is the job of a media planner to use media to convey the advertising message to the target customer in the best possible way (Katz, 2010). Accordingly, media planners define target audiences, decide 80

regarding the appropriate type of media such as newspaper, television or online as well as stipulate dates and times for the advertisements (Danaher, 2007).

The media planning process typically starts with briefing the agency and assessing the communications environment. From the beginning, the good's characteristics and the market segment are defined. Next, the target audience is described and media objectives and media strategy are set. This then leads to the selection of a media mix through intermedia and intramedia comparison. Finally, the budget is distributed, terms are defined and media is bought (Kliment, 2005; de Pelsmacker, Geuens, & van den Bergh, 2010; WEMF, 2010).

For decisions in media planning, quantitative and qualitative criteria are considered. While quantitative criteria such as reach or frequency have dominated media planning for many years, qualitative criteria are becoming more important (de Pelsmacker et al., 2010). Research on the latter is on the rise as well (Cheong & Kim, 2012; Pasadeos et al., 1997). Gensch (1970, p. 176) pointed out early that "selection of the most effective television shows, radio programs, magazines, newspapers, and other media vehicles to convey a message to a target population has always been more involved than simply selecting the set of media vehicles with the lowest cost-per-thousand." That this still holds true today, is confirmed through media planning practice (Ipsos, 2008) as well as more recent research (King & Reid, 1997; Knuth et al., 2013). Amongst the most frequently discussed criteria are context and involvement.

A lot of research has been done on the hypothesis that media affect the way advertising is perceived. Some studies focus on the actual environment and show that placement of advertisements next to a related article influences its effect (Unger, Durante, Gabrys, Koch, & Wailersbacher, 2002). In general, the fit of media content and promotional message has a positive impact (Norris & Colman, 1996). Other research looks at the unique editorial environment as a whole, likewise showing differences in perception (e.g. Appel, 2000; Lynch & Stipp, 1999; Norris & Colman, 1993, 1996; Philport, 1993). According to Hyun, Gentry, Park, and Jun (2006), magazine context and advertising recall are positively related. Esch, Krieger, and Strödter (2009) emphasise that the content environment influences a positive or negative attitude towards advertisements and brands. Research also shows that a positive experience with a medium leads to better advertising efficiency (Malthouse, Calder, & Tamhane, 2007). As a result, the editorial environment has a positive influence on the willingness to place an advert (Knuth et al., 2013).

The editorial environment is linked to the audience's involvement with the media product. Watching television and listening to the radio are common examples of passive media consumption with low activation and involvement. High involvement in turn is characterised by an active audience looking for content intentionally, for example when reading a newspaper or a magazine (Berkler, 2008). In the literature, high involvement is associated with advertising success and recall (Moorman, Willemsen, Neijens, & Smit, 2012). Studies also show a positive influence of programming on television advertising because of spillover effects from consumers' interests in the media content to the advert (Moorman et al., 2012; Tsiotsou, 2013). In print media, these effects are considered even stronger. Involvement with the publication leads to a positive assessment of advertisements, advertised products and buying decisions (Tipps, Berger, & Weinberg, 2006). With radio, listeners are more responsive to advertisements when consuming a programme they like and are involved in. Involvement with the programme influences opinions regarding the advertised brand as well as buying intentions (Norris & Colman, 1996).

Despite the media brand being considered along with other qualitative criteria in media planning (Ots & Wolff, 2008), very little research has been conducted in this

specific field. Numerous studies focus on the reader, viewer or user side (e.g. Althans & Brüne, 2005; Baumgarth, 2008; Chang & Chan-Olmsted, 2010; Chan-Olmsted, 2006a, 2011; Chan-Olmsted & Cha, 2007; McDowell, 2006, 2011; Siegert, 2001; for an overview on brand management research in the media industry, see Malmelin & Moisander, 2014), while ignoring the media brands' influence on media planners' decisions. However, the media brand provides potential benefits for advertisements and is related to other qualitative criteria.

### 2.3 Potential benefits of media brands for advertisements

From the advertisers' perspective, media brands have certain functions (Siegert, 2001). They provide a known and reliable marketing concept and enable advertisers to reach a well-defined target group. These benefits help in saving marketing resources. It is even possible to enter into equal partnerships with media brands. Despite Siegert (2001) distinguishing advertisers from audiences and the media company, functions from the latter two are also important. For instance, a media organisation's corporate identity and its differentiation from the competition provide benefits to advertising as much as stable sales figures are an advantage. On the audience side, a media brand provides a frame for interpretation of content and signals a certain quality, which is valuable to advertisers.

As shown earlier, the audience's involvement is important to advertisers. Certain demographic and psychographic aspects increase media planners' willingness to buy advertising space (Coffey & Wurst, 2012; Katz, 2010; Knuth et al., 2013). Media brands not only stand for the audience; they are able to reach them and are more likely to increase their involvement through activation and context, but can serve as a signal for the editorial environment (Baumgarth, 2004). Positive associations such as credibility or quality are transferred from the media brand to the advertised product or service (Gierl & Hüttl, 2009). Ots and Wolff (2008) point out that the relationship of the audience with the media brand personality can rub off on commercial messages and make communication more effective. If you combine the media brand image with media brand awareness, the resulting brand equity is another advantage. In the literature, three effects leading to potential benefits for advertisers are identified (Ots & Wolff, 2008):

- Behavioural loyalty of consumers to the media brand increases predictability and stability, making purchase of advertising space less risky
- Attitudinal loyalty of consumers of the media brand improves advertising impact and efficiency
- Differentiation of well-defined target groups of the media brand allows more advanced media planning routines and higher target group affinity

These brand effects are closely related to the functions of media brands from the company's and the audience's perspectives as proposed by Siegert (2001).

However, the media brand is potentially not equally important for all steps and decisions in the media planning process. Because of various branding opportunities and differences in involvement between types of media, the media brand might play different roles. Research also shows that the content of an advert is influential (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013) and premium advertisements are perceived as more prestigious (Hampel, Heinrich, & Campbell, 2012), which might lead to differences depending on types of goods and market segments as advertisers try to reach certain audiences and aim for a match with the media brand (Ots & Wolff, 2008; Sommer, 2015). For media strategies,

such differences could occur because of their quantitative or qualitative emphasis, for instance focusing on a few selected outlets (Katz, 2010).

### 3. Research questions

Following the importance of the media brand for advertising from a theoretical perspective, we address the research gap in scientific literature through investigating its role in media planning. First, we are interested in the relation of qualitative to quantitative selection criteria in media planning to understand the bigger picture: *How important are qualitative compared to quantitative selection criteria?* (RQ1) 180

Second, we investigate the importance of the media brand compared to other qualitative criteria: *How important is the media brand in media planning compared to other qualitative criteria?* (RQ2) 185

Third, we are interested in the role of the media brand within the media planning process. Therefore, we ask: *How important is the media brand for the different steps in the media planning process?* (RQ3)

Research questions four and five focus on the advertised goods and their market segment: *How important is the media brand for different types of goods?* (RQ4) and *How important is the media brand for different market segments?* (RQ5) 190

Furthermore, we examine the media brand in respect of the media planning strategy: *How important is the media brand for different media planning strategies?* (RQ6)

Finally, we investigate the role of the media brand with regards to media channels: *How important is the media brand for different media channels?* (RQ7) 195

In the following section, we will describe in further detail how we approach these research questions in our empirical study.

### 4. Method

In our exploratory study, we focus on media planners. This group of professionals was chosen because of its central position and gatekeeping function with regards to the selection and buying of advertising space and time (Bulearca & Bulearca, 2009; Knuth, 2012; Knuth et al., 2013; Sánchez-Tabernero, 2006). 200

The study was conducted in Austria (8 October–31 October 2013) and Switzerland (27 February–22 March 2013) to increase the number of media planners in the sample. Both countries are characterised by a high newspaper circulation, strong public service broadcasters and professionalisation in the media. In addition, both countries follow similar advertising restrictions, for instance concerning the separation of content and advertisements as well as product placements. Therefore, Austria's and Switzerland's media systems and market conditions are similar (Siegert, Thomas, & Mellmann, 2009). 205

In both countries, we were able to collaborate with partners providing access to media planners. In Switzerland, the media research organisation WEMF had just surveyed media planners (WEMF, 2012) and made their e-mail addresses available, which we updated. In Austria, we worked with *Forum Media Planung*, an industry association which provides several services for professionals interested in media planning. In total, we were able to collect more than 675 e-mail addresses in Austria and Switzerland and obtained 154 responses. The response rate of 22.81% is comparable to other studies involving media professionals in German-speaking countries (Habann, 2010; Illenberger, 2013). Non-response tends to be due to busy schedules and frequent requests to answer online questionnaires. For our analysis, we focused on those 99 respondents working in media 215 220



planning (58 Austrian, 41 Swiss).<sup>1</sup> They were on average 36.95 years old, female by majority (60.60%) and had more than six years of experience in their job (74.80%).<sup>2</sup> Most respondents were responsible for a budget of more than two million CHF/EUR (67.70%).<sup>3</sup>

Based on our research questions, we developed a standardised online questionnaire in German for both countries, which we discussed with an expert in the field: a Swiss media planner with more than three years of experience. He provided feedback on comprehensibility, validity and completeness of our items, which we included in the final version. His insights were particularly helpful in deciding which items needed further explanation. The method was chosen following recommendations in the literature. Building on an explorative paper (Ots & Wolff, 2008), a study with a larger sample was needed. When comparing quantitative to qualitative criteria (RQ1), respondents had to select a relation of 90:10, 70:30 50:50, 30:70 or 10:90.<sup>4</sup> For our second research question (RQ2) we compiled qualitative criteria frequently discussed in the literature and used in other studies (Ots & Wolff, 2008; de Pelsmacker et al., 2010; WEMF, 2012): amount of information that can be conveyed, editorial environment, function (e.g. information versus entertainment), gut instinct/intuition, image/credibility, impact (e.g. involvement), media brand, media mix fit, personal experience and well-defined target group. Regarding the importance of the media brand in the media planning process (RQ3), we derived five steps from the literature: briefing, intermedia comparison, intramedia comparison, distribution of budget and decision on terms (Kliment, 2005; de Pelsmacker et al., 2010; WEMF, 2010). For our fourth research question (RQ4), we distinguished convenience goods (e.g. toothpaste), shopping goods (e.g. furniture), specialty goods (e.g. car), immaterial goods/services (e.g. haircut) and unsought goods (e.g. gravestone) (Kuhn & Zajontz, 2011). When looking at the market segments (RQ5), there is differentiation between discount (low price/quality), general (medium price/quality) and premium (high price/quality) categories (Pechtl, 2005). Research question six (RQ6) addresses media planning strategies: agglomeration (focus on one area), broad (as many people as possible), deep (as many contacts per person as possible), dominance (increased presence in one type of medium), pulsation (advertising in phases) and recency (reaching target person directly before buying decision) (Dahlen, Lange, & Smith, 2010; WEMF, 2010). Finally, we asked about the media brand and different types of media: cinema, newspaper, magazine, online, radio, and television (RQ7). The importance of the media brand for all items was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not important, 5 = very important). Their order was randomised for RQ2, RQ4, RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7. In a pre-test amongst a small number of students, we checked the technical functionality of the questionnaire.

For our analysis, we conducted paired difference tests with SPSS,<sup>5</sup> which allows us to investigate differences in the importance of the media brand in media planning. To be able to do so, we checked our data to be approximately normally distributed (Bortz, 2005). In order to facilitate the understanding of the results at first glance, we have chosen histograms as means of visualisation. Items are ranked depending on media planners' ratings with horizontal lines indicating significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below.<sup>6</sup> More detailed results can be found in the [Appendix](#).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Qualitative versus quantitative selection criteria

When asked about the relation of quantitative to qualitative selection criteria (RQ1), media planners in Austria and Switzerland rated the former as more important. While



Figure 1. Importance of qualitative selection criteria in the media planning process;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).

3.00% favoured them 90:10 and 45.50% compared them 70:30, 38.40% saw them as equal. 13.10% said that qualitative criteria would be more important than quantitative.

5.2 The media brand and other qualitative criteria

Amongst the qualitative criteria (RQ2; see Figure 1), the media mix fit is most important according to media planners [mean ( $M$ ) = 4.34, standard deviation (SD) = 0.79]. They also rate image/credibility ( $M = 4.17$ , SD = 0.83), impact ( $M = 4.09$ , SD = 0.73), editorial environment ( $M = 3.99$ , SD = 0.78), function ( $M = 3.91$ , SD = 0.83) and target group ( $M = 3.88$ , SD = 0.90) comparably high. Significantly less important is the media brand ( $M = 3.52$ , SD = 0.94), as well as personal experience ( $M = 3.43$ , SD = 1.05), information conveyed ( $M = 3.34$ , SD = 0.81) and intuition ( $M = 3.25$ , SD = 1.11).

5.3 The media brand in the media planning process

Concerning the importance of the media brand in the media planning process, the results show significant differences across the various steps (RQ3; see Figure 2). Media planners rated intramedia comparison, which is the comparison of different media outlets, the highest ( $M = 3.99$ , SD = 0.74). Significantly less important are the distribution of the budget ( $M = 3.59$ , SD = 0.94) and the decision on the terms ( $M = 3.54$ , SD = 0.92) such as timing and frequency. In the beginning of the process, the media brand is significantly less important for intermedia comparison ( $M = 3.02$ , SD = 0.99), which means comparing different channels, and the briefing of the agency ( $M = 2.80$ , SD = 1.19).



Figure 2. Importance of the media brand in the media planning process;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).





Figure 3. Importance of the media brand for advertising different goods;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).

#### 5.4 The media brand and types of goods

We also see significant differences for the various types of goods investigated (RQ4; see Figure 3). According to media planners the media brand is most important when advertising specialty goods such as luxury products ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ). Significantly less important is the media brand for shopping goods ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), which are characterised through an intentional search and decision process. Immaterial goods/services follow ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ). The media brand is least important for convenience goods i.e. products of everyday consumption ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) and unsought goods i.e. products bought because of unpleasant circumstances ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ).

#### 5.5 The media brand and market segments

The results for different market segments point in a similar direction (RQ5; see Figure 4). The media brand is most important in the premium segment ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), which stands for high price and/or quality. For the general segment with medium price and/or quality, it is valued significantly less ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). According to media planners, the media brand is least important when advertising in the discount category ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ; low price and/or quality).

#### 5.6 The media brand and media planning strategies

When considering the importance of the media brand for different media planning strategies (RQ6; see Figure 5), the media brand is rated the highest in a dominance strategy, which proposes an increased presence in just one type of medium ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). This rating significantly differs from that for the other strategies. The next highest rating of the media brand is in a pulsation strategy ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ), which involves advertising in phases; followed by recency ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), which involves reaching the target person directly before the buying decision; deep ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), which involves achieving as many contacts per person as possible and finally agglomeration ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), which involves concentrating on an area that has



Figure 4. Importance of the media brand for advertising in different market segments;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).



Figure 5. Importance of the media brand for different media planning strategies;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).

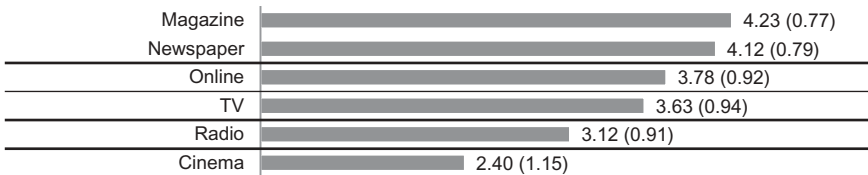


Figure 6. Importance of the media brand for advertising in different media channels;  $n = 99$ ; average on five-point Likert scale; solid line indicates significant differences between contiguous items and all other items below;  $-p < 0.01$ ,  $-p < 0.05$  (paired difference test).

high consumption. The media brand is least important in a broad strategy ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ), which aims to reach as many people in the target group as possible.

5.7 The media brand and media channels

Finally, we investigated the media brand and different media channels (RQ7; see Figure 6). The media brand is most important when advertising in print media (magazine  $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.77$  and newspaper  $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ), but is rated significantly lower for online ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). This is followed in succession by television ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), radio ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) and cinema ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), all significantly different from one another.

In the following section, these results are interpreted and discussed in further detail before conclusions are drawn and implications presented.

6. Discussion

It is hardly surprising that media planners rate quantitative selection criteria higher than qualitative selection criteria. However, the results show that the latter play an important role as well (RQ1), a fact that has been previously highlighted in the literature (de Pelsmacker et al., 2010). One of the respondents used the questionnaire’s option for further remarks to conclude that “qualitative criteria are difficult to argue. Clients need hard facts and want to see figures. Hence, the focus lies on quantitative performance”. This is confirmed by Rudi Kobza, an Austrian media planner, who explicitly calls for taking qualitative criteria into account: “Media planning in its current form is a computer game. Often isolated in a theoretical model, calculating gross rating points based on probability of exposure. More than ever, strategy, creation and media have to be looked at

as a whole and above all qualitatively, everything else is book keeping” (Horizont, 2014). His strong opinion might also be founded on qualitative criteria as an option for differentiation for media agencies, with all other measures being equal. While looking at quantitative performance is a must for everyone, qualitative criteria offer the potential for positioning and expertise. These developments make them especially interesting.

However, qualitative selection criteria vary in importance. Media planners in Austria and Switzerland rated media mix fit, image/credibility, impact, editorial environment, function and well-defined target group highest (RQ2). While the media brand itself is significantly less important, all the highly-rated criteria as listed earlier are related to it. Concerning the media mix, the media brand is valuable as it is the connecting element of a multichannel service, offering different options. The image/credibility is the audience’s perception of the media brand. As shown earlier, the media brand can also stand for involvement and the function of a medium as well as its editorial environment and target group (see section 2.3). Despite these connections, one respondent concluded that the whole matter is not worth its discussion: “I assume that the chatter about media brands is artificially created by legacy media. Basically, it is the old topic of qualitative versus quantitative criteria – which the quantitative have won.” Another respondent raised a problem with media brands in media planning: “The importance of media brands is normally not recorded on a broad basis, in other words, subjective.” This, again, points out the focus on quantitative figures, also when dealing with qualitative information. Several papers have tried to fill that void with models quantifying the latter (e.g. Lynch & Stipp, 1999; Philport, 1993). Their aim is to establish a standard of measurement accepted in the industry. In line with these developments in media planning practice, personal experience, information conveyed and intuition are the least important qualitative criteria.

When looking at the results for the importance of the media brand in the media planning process (RQ3), the media brand is rated highest for intramedia comparison, which is the actual relation of one outlet to another. In this step, not only quantitative criteria count but also qualitative characteristics such as the media brand (Knuth et al., 2013; Ots & Wolff, 2008). Media planners consider the match (or the mismatch) between the promotional message and the media product. In addition, the media brand image can be a valuable benefit of advertising in a certain media outlet. An advert in the *New York Times* might benefit from the media brand’s credibility compared to a competing news organisation with similar reach but different reputation. In contrast, the media brand is least important for the agency briefing. This is rather surprising as one would expect advertisers and advertising agencies to appreciate the fit of their promotional message with the means of delivery. Siegert (2001) even suggests equal collaborations between media brands and advertisers. Therefore, media companies need to work on their branding strategies with advertisers and advertising agencies in order to increase the awareness of their media brand. This gives them the opportunity to stand out in the first stage of the media planning process, making it more likely to sell their advertising space and time. Offering training events to educate media planners about their brand could be an option (Knuth et al., 2013).

Differences between types of goods match their characteristics (RQ4). The media brand is most important for the most exclusive products: specialty goods. In this category, the match with the promotional message is particularly relevant. Media planners may achieve a transfer of the glamorous lifestyle of *Sex and the City* or *Cosmopolitan* to products advertised in this context (Ots & Wolff, 2008). Comparably difficult is advertising for immaterial goods/services, as branding is hard and the level of quality might differ. As a consequence, the media brand seems to be valued less. However, when for instance

advertising financial services, the promotional message potentially benefits from the audience trusting a media brand. This indicates that the value of the media company's brand differs depending on the advertised good. Hence, media organisations would want to emphasise their brand for certain types of goods but focus on other criteria when it is less important. 385

Looking at the importance of the media brand for different market segments, results are in line with their characteristics (RQ5). The media brand is rated highest in the premium segment, which corresponds with specialty goods. Media planners rate qualitative criteria higher, when it comes to high product quality. They seem to focus less on reach and more on a media brand representing, for instance, certain audience characteristics. As quality and price decrease, the media brand becomes less important. In the discount segment, which stands for high quantities, reaching as many contacts as possible is more important than a perfect fit between promotional message and media brand. Media companies should either exploit their brand or focus on other criteria, whichever is more appropriate. 390 395

We found that media brands are significantly more important for the media planning strategy of dominance (RQ6), which means an increased presence in just one type of medium. This is linked to intramedia comparison in the media planning process for which the media brand is most important. One respondent questioned the relation of the media brand and the media planning strategy, which is supported by our results not showing significant differences. Therefore, we conclude that the importance of the media brand depends more on the client, for instance whether it is a specialty good and/or the discount segment, rather than the approach the media planner selects. This is in line with one media planner pointing out that the relevance of the media brand might be different from case-to-case. 400 405

The media brand is most important when making selection decisions with print media (RQ7), which matches previous results about activation and involvement of different types of media (Berkler, 2008; Tipps et al., 2006). Online outlets are often linked to traditional media, which might make an online brand more important as a well-established offline brand is being transferred. Branding of television and radio is more difficult because of less activation and involvement or even limited options of branding (Wilby & Conroy, 1994). As a consequence, the media brand is less important when buying advertising time. Media planners rank cinema last, when it comes to the importance of media brands in their selection decisions. This is in line with movie theatres rarely having a distinct positioning or a strong brand. These results show that companies in print media, in particular, should invest in their brands (Knuth et al., 2013). 410 415

## 7. Limitations and further research

Our results shine a first light on the role of the media brand in media planning. However, they also raise more questions. Media planners were not given a definition of the term *media brand* and could have interpreted it differently, which is the main limitation of our study. We assumed a common understanding based on media brands being frequently discussed in the industry (publications, trade press, etc.) and on the feedback of our expert. McDowell and Batten (2005) state that branding terminology is well established in the media industry; however, professionals lack an in-depth knowledge of media brand management. In addition, the media brand being related to other qualitative criteria may have caused a blurring of meanings. Future studies should try to improve the way of measurement and could aim for quantifying the effect of the media brand on 420 425

advertisements compared to other media selection criteria. Based on our data, we are also 430  
unable to distinguish between product brands and company brands. However, media  
planners may want to evaluate the fit of the advertisement with the show's as well as  
the broadcaster's brand, which would be an interesting field for further research.

Other areas worth studying are (new) media planning models, incorporating media 435  
brands and other qualitative criteria. Differences depending on advertisers' goals might be  
interesting to examine. Studies should also look into how media planners' subjective  
perception of the media brand influences their decisions. It could represent a certain  
service quality, such as support in the buying process or a detailed reporting system,  
which makes media planners more likely to consider the media brand in the planning  
process (Knuth et al., 2013). There is also no research on differences in the importance of 440  
the media brand when comparing media planners with advertisers. Last but not least, the  
media brand should be included in studies investigating drivers of advertising revenue  
(Wirtz et al., 2011) and success factors in the media industry in general (Sommer & von  
Rimscha, 2013). We would then understand not only the media brand's role on the  
audience side and in the advertising market but also its importance for the media company 445  
as a whole.

## 8. Conclusion

Media planners rate quantitative selection criteria as more important compared to quali-  
tative selection criteria, but the latter are still considered and are relevant in the media  
planning process (RQ1). The media brand itself is not rated as particularly important 450  
(RQ2), but is connected to other qualitative criteria. In addition, only two out of 25 media  
brand-focused items were ranked below a mean of 2.50 (discount segment and cinema).  
Results show that the media brand is most important for media planners when advertising  
in magazines or newspapers (RQ7). Therefore, companies in the print industry should  
invest in their brands as well as in branding strategies in the advertising market (Knuth 455  
et al., 2013). This becomes especially important when looking for advertisements from the  
specialty goods sector and/or the premium market segment for which the media brand is  
also rated higher (RQ4 and RQ5). Consequently, media brands should focus their efforts  
in this area as media outlets are also judged by their advertising, which influences the  
perception of content (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013). However, the media brand is less 460  
valuable to media planners when buying space and time for advertising convenience  
goods, unsought goods or the discount market segment.

According to Baumgarth (2004), strong media brands are more likely to be in the  
consideration set of decision-makers. As they are most important in intramedia compar-  
ison within the media planning process, media companies should work on standing out 465  
among their competitors in this phase. With the relevance of the media brand primarily  
depending on the client (type of good and market segment) rather than the media planning  
strategy (RQ6), media companies could also target the first stage of the process. With  
media brands being part of the agency briefing, they would have an additional opportunity  
to stand out in order to sell more advertising space and time (RQ3). Having their products 470  
and services present at the earliest stage of the media planning process might provide  
benefits such as cross-media advertising, offering opportunities across several platforms.  
In line with this argument, cross-media offers have been identified as a driver of  
advertising revenue (Knuth et al., 2013). Other areas that media brands might emphasise  
are their ability to achieve higher levels of activation and involvement. They can also 475  
stand for a certain target group (Coffey & Wurst, 2012).

Media managers need to define a unique set of associations and what the media brand stands for. They have to develop a clear brand strategy from their brand identity, for the audience as well as the advertising market, to position themselves in comparison to their competitors and to highlight their unique selling proposition. In doing so, media brands provide benefits to advertisers. However, these benefits, such as media brands creating higher activation and involvement with content and adverts alike as well as providing cross-media offers and a certain target group, need to be communicated to media planners and decision-makers. Offering workshops for media planners to inform them about the brand might be a good starting point. Only by increasing awareness of what a media brand stands for and its benefits, will media companies be able to exploit their potential in the advertising market.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes

1. The remaining respondents were working in advertising, on the client side or in other fields. Research indicates that they tend to process criteria differently when compared with media planning professionals (King, Reid, & Macias, 2004). As the number of completed questionnaires in those groups was very small and the paper focuses on media planners, we excluded them from our analysis.
2. Concerning years of experience, 2.00% of the respondents had up to one year of experience, 23.20% had up to 2–5 years, 26.30% had up to 6–9 years, 25.30% had up to 10–15 years and 23.20% had more than 15 years.
3. Fifteen per cent of the respondents were responsible for 100,000–2,000,000 CHF/EUR, 37.40% for 2,000,001–10,000,000 CHF/EUR, 30.30% for more than 10,000,000 CHF/EUR and 17.20% did not answer.
4. Respondents rated different quantitative and qualitative criteria in previous questions and knew what those terms referred to.
5. *t*-Tests for differences between countries did not show any systematic differences or patterns, which confirms the similar market conditions we assumed.
6. Results for RQ3 are not ranked depending on importance but remain in order of the media planning process.

### Notes on contributors

Christoph Sommer is a Research and Teaching Associate at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich where he focuses on marketing in the media industry. He has been a visiting scholar at the Media Management and Transformation Center at Jönköping International Business School and at the NYU Stern School of Business. He studied at the University of Vienna and at the Fudan University Shanghai.

Linda Marty is a Brand Manager at Branders Group AG in Zurich. She studied at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich.

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Appendix

Table A1. Importance of qualitative selection criteria in the media planning process.

	Media Mix			Image			Involvement			Editorial Environment			Role of the Medium			Target Group			Media Brand			Personal Experience			Information Conveyed		
	T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.		T	sig.	
Image	1.87																										
Involvement	2.80	**	0.92																								
editorial environment	3.79	**	1.99	*	1.06																						
Role of the medium	4.41	**	2.77	**	2.16	*	0.89																				
Target group	4.31	**	3.03	**	2.01	*	1.02						0.31														
Media brand	7.10	**	6.21	**	6.04	**	4.29	**					3.71	**	3.08	**											
Personal experience	7.17	**	5.95	**	5.46	**	4.29	**					4.06	**	3.57	**	0.62										
Information conveyed	10.27	**	8.08	**	7.65	**	6.55	**					5.68	**	5.31	**	1.57					0.82					
Intuition	8.39	**	8.15	**	6.67	**	5.62	**					4.99	**	5.05	**	1.91					1.78				0.75	

Note: n = 99; paired difference test; \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01.

Table A2. Importance of the media brand in the media planning process.

	Agency briefing		Intermedia comparison		Intramedia comparison		Distribution of budget	
	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.
Intermedia comparison	-2.02	*						
Intramedia comparison	-9.30	**	-9.51	**				
Distribution of budget	-5.98	**	-4.96	**	3.98	**		
Decision on terms	-5.37	**	-4.40	**	4.38	**	0.52	

Note:  $n = 99$ ; paired difference test; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table A3. Importance of the media brand for advertising different goods.

	Specialty goods		Shopping goods		Immaterial goods		Convenience goods	
	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.
Shopping goods	7.94	**						
Immaterial goods	11.22	**	2.84	**				
Convenience goods	15.55	**	11.00	**	7.68	**		
Unsought goods	13.64	**	8.93	**	6.83	**	0.55	

Note:  $n = 99$ ; paired difference test; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table A4. Importance of the media brand for advertising in different prize segments.

	Premium		General	
	T	sig.	T	sig.
General	15.54	**		
Discount	22.82	**	13.95	**

Note:  $n = 99$ ; paired difference test; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table A5. Importance of the media brand for different media planning strategies.

	Dominance		Pulsation		Recency		Deep		Agglomeration	
	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.
Pulsation	3.87	**								
Recency	3.85	**	0.58							
Deep	4.59	**	0.88		0.37					
Agglomeration	6.11	**	2.80	**	2.02	*	1.38			
Broad	7.51	**	3.68	**	2.83	**	2.96	**	1.46	

Note:  $n = 99$ ; paired difference test; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table A6. Importance of the media brand for advertising in different media channels.

	Magazine		Newspaper		Online		Television		Radio	
	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.	T	sig.
Newspaper	1.35									
Online	3.50	**	2.83	**						
Television	5.65	**	4.47	**	2.22	*				
Radio	10.54	**	9.85	**	4.53	**	5.22	**		
Cinema	13.42	**	13.13	**	7.76	**	9.31	**	6.15	**

Note:  $n = 99$ ; paired difference test; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .